



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE BIBLICAL WORLD

VOLUME XXIX

FEBRUARY, 1907

NUMBER 2

Editorial

THE REWARDS OF FREE INVESTIGATION

The question *Cui bono* must ever and again recur to the earnest-minded worker in every field. Why should the geologist toil at the problem of how worlds are made? Why not be content with the fact that they are, and give over asking how they came to be? Why should the philosopher spend his time laboriously framing a thinkable *Weltanschauung*? Would it not be more useful to raise turnips? Why should the astronomer seek so diligently to find the number and the distance of the double stars? Will they shine any more brightly when he has finished his work? Why should the biblical scholar laboriously search out the history of ancient nations, the origin of ancient institutions, the date and authorship of ancient books, the meanings of long-obsolete words, the usages of Greek cases?

Now and then we seem to get the answer as in a nutshell. General Leonard Wood, speaking at the memorial service to Dr. Walter Reed, who conducted the experiments by which it was proved that yellow fever is communicated by the bite of a mosquito, experiments in the course of which one of his heroic associates lost his life, is reported to have said: "His discovery results in the saving of more lives annually than were lost in the Cuban War, and saves the commercial interests of the world a greater financial loss in each year than the cost of the entire Cuban War."

Modern medical science, itself impossible apart from the scientific spirit in general, and achieving many of its results by processes and instruments which were invented rather in the scientific spirit proper than in the specifically philanthropic spirit, achieves for humanity

almost in an hour results that thousands of physicians in the ordinary practice of their profession could never achieve. The faith that truth is worth searching for indicates itself in human welfare, and even in results that can be statistically expressed and entered upon the ledger.

But Dr. Wood's statement suggests even more than it expresses. Are the needs of men's minds less real than those of their bodies? Was the service which those heroic assistants of Dr. Reed rendered, when they exposed themselves to the danger of death from yellow fever, confined to the reduction of the death rate and the saving of money? Is it worth more to keep men alive than to inspire them to heroic unselfishness? Where are the real values of life? Is the farmer a greater benefactor of mankind than the teacher? He renders the world a valuable service who makes wheat grow where before there were only sage brush and the cactus; who coaxes nature to add another to the list of edible fruits; who makes a flower larger, or its odor more delicious. Does he do less who by years of silent toil, in the quiet laboratory of the mind, furnishes a foundation for sound ethical thinking; for a religious life that appeals to thoughtful men; for institutions which conduce to human prosperity?

And if these latter achievements are as real and as valuable as the former, can they be attained by any less thorough, fearlessly investigative process than those which are necessary for the former? Shall we bid the chemist and the bacteriologist go forward with their work, even at the cost of a life now and then lost in the process of experimentation, while we bid the philosopher, the theologian, the biblical student stay his hand? Is progress desirable in horticulture and in medicine and domestic science, but undesirable in the sciences that deal directly with the things of the spirit?

The answer will depend in the end upon our confidence in the healthfulness of truth, and in the power of the human mind to discover it. He who has this confidence will not demand that the result of an investigation be forecast as a prerequisite to its being undertaken, nor shut the door in the face of it lest it rob us of something valuable. Comparatively little knowledge of the history of investigation will teach him that the uncovering of a tablet in Assyria or of a papyrus in Egypt, the more accurate definition of the force of the Greek article or of a Hebrew noun, may contribute each its

mite to the modification of religious conviction and life in America today; and the aggregation of many such increments may bring about results of large significance. But he will welcome all investigations, not because he foresees the result that will come or desires change, but because he desires truth and has confidence in its helpfulness.

It is this confidence that is the mainspring of our modern intellectual life, and especially of that investigative study which is so characteristic of it. Mere curiosity may start a man upon the road: but only the conviction that truth is good for man can give him that patience and sustained enthusiasm which are necessary to the successful investigator. When that confidence dies out from men's hearts, blank and dreary pessimism is not far away. While it lasts, fearless investigation will go forward. All who share it ought, not indeed to accept all the results of every real and pretended investigation, but to applaud and encourage investigation itself.

Nor is it desirable that investigation should be any less free and untrammelled in ethics and theology than in physics and bacteriology. In both realms there are certain qualities that the investigator must possess in order that his results may be entitled to confidence. In neither is there need of the prejudiced and prepossessed advocate. In both the results even of the most competent investigators must run the gauntlet of the criticism of their peers before they can ask to be included in the encyclopedia of assured results. But in both alike freedom of research is indispensable to the best results. Indeed, it is even more necessary in the theological than in the physical and biological sciences. For the denial of it in the former realm not only estops progress, but throws the mantle of doubt over already acquired possessions. The reply, "These matters are not open to discussion," engenders the very doubt it was intended to suppress. Free investigation is the only guarantee of strength of conviction.

We need, more than words can easily express, men intellectually and spiritually competent, and by long study amply equipped, for investigation in all the fields of theological thought, and we need that faith in the value and healthfulness of truth that will open all doors to them. Fearless investigation is the condition alike of healthful progress and of secure possession.